



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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THE WISCONSIN DOT IN 2003: MEETING NEEDS AND SETTING NEW DIRECTIONS

As Governor Doyle and his administration took office in 2003, the state faced tough challenges for the economy, the state budget and the overall vision for the state. The Governor embraced the challenge and succeeded in fixing an inherited \$3.2 billion budget deficit while still making needed investments in infrastructure. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), led by Secretary Frank Busalacchi, accomplished its part to balance the state's budget, meet the needs of citizens and businesses, and set new directions for the future.

WisDOT's responsibilities are enormous:

- The agency manages a multi-modal transportation system that allows over 3 million workers to commute to work, that handles at least \$270 billion of freight and brings tourists to the state to spend over \$11.6 billion in Wisconsin.
- In service directly to the public, the Division of Motor Vehicles handles over 11.7 million transactions each year and the Wisconsin State Patrol provides service to motorists throughout the state.
- To meet its responsibilities, WisDOT partners with all 1,900+ local government units, federal agencies, transportation providers, consultants, contractors and a variety of other public and private agencies.

Looking back on 2003, WisDOT clearly met its ongoing mission to "Provide leadership in the development and operation of a safe and efficient transportation system."

Making Investments to Grow Wisconsin

A cornerstone of the Doyle administration is the Grow Wisconsin economic development initiative. WisDOT supported this initiative through the development and maintenance of an efficient, multi-modal transportation system:

- In 2003, Governor Doyle signed a biennial budget providing more than \$3 billion in transportation investment, including \$1.8 billion for highway construction, rehabilitation and maintenance. This funding commitment, despite difficult financial times, provides

for key highway improvements that benefit businesses, such as the new US 10 in east-central Wisconsin, opened by the Governor in December.

- The Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) program provides grants to local sponsors to support projects that create or retain jobs. In 2003, WisDOT made 13 TEA grants for a total of almost \$3.8 million that created or retained over 2,600 jobs. The grants include road and rail projects along with the first harbor project in the history of the TEA program.
- WisDOT approved almost \$6.8 million in Freight Railroad Infrastructure Improvement Program loans in 2003 to help seven businesses complete rail-related improvements. The loans are used to improve rail infrastructure, highway/grade crossings, and to construct new rail-served facilities with the overall goal to boost economic development and jobs.
- To enhance public safety and encourage economic growth, WisDOT announced 75 airport improvement projects at public use airports throughout the state. The federal, state and local share funds invested in these projects totaled over \$77.5 million.
- In May, Governor Doyle announced a \$2.8 million Harbor Assistance Program grant to expand a coal and limestone storage facility for the Manitowoc Public Utility and construct an adjacent access road at the Port of Manitowoc. The improvements will allow efficient and reliable energy services to power homes and the area's economy.
- In May, Wisconsin secured \$936,990 in federal scenic byways grants to help fund a variety of improvements along Wisconsin's Great River Road (WIS 35). These investments will help tourism efforts in western Wisconsin.

Supporting our urban areas

Governor Doyle's Grow Wisconsin plan provides special emphasis to support of the state's urban areas, especially in southeast Wisconsin. In 2003, WisDOT undertook a number of efforts to provide quality transportation in our urban areas:

- In spring, Governor Doyle approved an \$810 million initiative to rebuild the Marquette Interchange in Milwaukee. The project will save at least \$80 million from previous plans and will provide a safe and efficient interchange. Construction will begin in 2004, with completion by the end of 2008.
- In June, a WisDOT-sponsored audit showed the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) has maintained strong performance and high efficiency standards while being "one of the best managed and operated transit systems in the country." WisDOT is required by state statute to conduct a management performance audit of urban transit systems receiving state aid at least once every five years.

- An independent analysis released in 2003 by an international consultant confirms that financial support for Wisconsin public transit services is a wise investment that generates substantial economic returns. The study by HLB Decision Economics, Inc. looked at public transit services in six communities and concluded that every dollar invested in public transit in the state generates over \$3 in economic returns.
- The state's investment in passenger rail service showed solid benefits in 2003. Through November, ridership on Amtrak's Hiawatha Service between Milwaukee and Chicago was up by 8.5% over the previous year. The trains carry almost 1,300 passengers a day in this busy urban corridor.
- In December, Governor Doyle announced \$23 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) awards to help fund 29 transportation projects in southeastern Wisconsin's ozone non-attainment and maintenance areas. Projects include new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transit and downtown revitalization.

Promoting transportation safety

WisDOT and the State Patrol are working with hundreds of local partners to make Wisconsin's roads as safe as possible. Despite many positive efforts, the year 2003 continued to be a challenging time in Wisconsin, as the 838 total traffic fatalities set a 23-year high. The partners are continuing several initiatives and setting new directions to reverse this trend.

- In 2003, WisDOT relocated the Bureau of Transportation Safety into the Division of State Patrol. The move provides a more coordinated effort to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries from traffic crashes on Wisconsin roadways.
- Governor Doyle signed into law a new drunk driving mandate for a 0.08 blood alcohol content (BAC) limit that took effect on September 30, 2003. The new standard applies to first, second and third offenses, while fourth and subsequent offenses remain subject to a 0.02 limit. The 0.08 law brought Wisconsin into compliance with a Congressional mandate, thus preserving the state's full share of federal transportation funding.
- The "Baby Luke" law took effect in December to prohibit motorists from driving if they have any detectable amount of a controlled substance in their system. The new law addressed a shortcoming in prior laws that made it difficult to prosecute drivers impaired by drugs other than alcohol when little or no alcohol was present in their system.
- WisDOT's education and enforcement efforts helped seat belt use in the state reach the highest observed level since the mandatory seat belt use law went into effect in 1987. A spring 2003 seat belt observational survey conducted by WisDOT reported that 69.8% of passenger vehicle occupants used their seat belts.

- State Patrol officers planned, executed and publicized concentrated enforcement efforts in partnership with local law enforcement agencies. The concentrated details created a more visible law enforcement presence on highways to deter motorists from illegal and irresponsible acts that endanger themselves and others.
- The new Kenosha Safety and Weight Enforcement Facility (SWEF) opened on Interstate 94. This state-of-the-art facility ensures that commercial trucks traveling on a primary commercial route meet safety and weight regulations and helps maintain an efficient commercial transportation system that benefits the state's economy. All SWEFs were connected to a new Ethernet system in 2003 to allow download of key safety data from the federal government.
- During 2003, WisDOT sponsored motorcycle safety summits with representatives of the state's motorcycling community to help better understand the underlying factors involved in the recent increase in motorcyclist fatalities. These discussions have set the stage for a groundbreaking state-level conference in 2004 to determine what elements of the National Agenda for Motorcycle Safety should be pursued in Wisconsin.

Meeting the needs of our customers

Business, communities, motorists and many others represent WisDOT's customers. At some point, the agency must fill a need for every person in the state. The department took many key steps in 2003 to enhance and improve its service to customers.

- In 2003, WisDOT created the new Bureau of Equity and Environmental Strategies. The new structure will help WisDOT accomplish these and other goals:
 - Ensure that historically under-involved populations are involved in the planning, development, and construction of highway improvement projects;
 - Impact the policy direction and implementation of environmental laws as they relate to transportation;
 - Increase responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs of all Wisconsin citizens directly affected by transportation projects; and
 - Improve communication and coordination on issues involving environmental justice, community impacts, land use, and equal rights employment opportunities.
- WisDOT continues on a project to automate oversize / overweight permits. In a survey conducted this year, 76% of carriers received their permits within eight hours of application, up from just 13% in 1998. The multi-year effort is scheduled for full implementation by June of 2004.

- With an average of nearly 15 million hits per month, WisDOT's Web site helps over 150,000 on-line monthly visitors find transportation information. The department successfully redesigned the site in 2002, and users have lauded the changes.
- A 2003 news release by AAA and an accompanying report by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety praised Wisconsin as one of just six states that dedicates a specific section on distracted driving in the driver's license manual. The Wisconsin Motorists' Handbook includes a section on inattentive driving that addresses many of the top national concerns.
- The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in 2003 honored the Gary-Chicago-Milwaukee corridor Web site as one of four winners of its third annual national award for best traveler information Web site. The Web site is developed cooperatively with data from the Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin DOTs.
- The Division of Motor Vehicles implemented a new networking technology for its travel team remote service centers. The system provides faster network processing, improves customer service and saves \$70,000 over the previous dial-up connections.

Strengthening partnerships

WisDOT fulfills its roles in partnership with hundreds of other federal, state and local agencies and private companies. This past year, the department worked to strengthen existing partnerships and build new relationships for the future.

- In April, Governor Doyle announced \$2.6 million in state and federal grants to help non-profit organizations and local governments purchase specialized transit vehicles serving elderly and disabled individuals. A total of 26 grants were distributed through WisDOT's Elderly and Disabled Transportation Capital Assistance Program.
- In October, Secretary Busalacchi signed a contract to begin the \$3.9 million renovation of the Milwaukee Amtrak station. The public / private agreement with Milwaukee Intermodal Partners will transform the station into a "gateway to Milwaukee" connecting walkers, bikers, motorists and bus, air and rail passengers.
- WisDOT continued its partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, the federal government and local transit providers through the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP). In 2003, the partners invested \$6 million to connect low-income workers to job locations.
- In November, Secretary Busalacchi announced aggressive goals ranging from 20% to 60% for disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) participation on four contracts for the Marquette Interchange reconstruction. The goals are part of a broader strategy the state will employ to increase the partnership of DBE firms on transportation projects.

- WisDOT continued its “Sharing the Light” partnership with state, federal and private agencies to strengthen and expand agreements on the use of fiber optic strands in highway rights-of-way. Recent efforts could extend the network to the Milwaukee Amtrak station and to northern locations throughout the state. WisDOT’s fiber optic network supports traveler information signs, communication, traffic management and structural monitors.
- WisDOT joined in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration and the Wisconsin Department of Justice to incorporate electronic freeway message signs into the “Amber Alert” system.
- The State Patrol continued building out and sharing the Mobile Data Communications Network (MCDN). In 2003, 22 new county and local government law enforcement agencies joined this partnership that now includes 150 agencies. The MDCN allows officers to directly query criminal justice and motor vehicle databases from their cars, enhancing officer safety and the effectiveness of law enforcement.
- In 2003, WisDOT developed a partnership with four other state agencies to improve state vehicle utilization. The initiative created a statewide fleet database and used a statewide contract to outsource key maintenance activities.

The year 2004 and beyond will see new challenges and opportunities for transportation in Wisconsin. WisDOT will continue to be a leader in meeting these challenges and setting the direction for a strong, safe and efficient transportation system that can meet the needs of a growing state of Wisconsin.

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